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Spotlight on the Labour Account

Learn more about the Labour Account, its benefits and how it can be used to draw unique labour market insights.

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Overview

The ABS produces a range of different data to provide complementary insights into the Australian labour market across many topics.

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These data are drawn from household surveys, business surveys and administrative datasets, and brought together in the Australian Labour Account. Collectively, these four key data source types make up the four ['pillars'](#) ([/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/labour-statistics-concepts-sources-and-methods/2023/methods-four-pillars-labour-statistics](#)) of ABS labour statistics.

This article outlines what the Labour Account is, why we produce it, its benefits and how it can be used.

What is the Labour Account

The Labour Account draws labour market data from a range of sources together into a single set of tables to create a coherent and internally consistent set of high-quality labour market estimates.

The Labour Account provides quarterly time series estimates across four key components (known as "quadrants") related to work and the broader labour market: People, Jobs, Hours and Payments. It is our most comprehensive source of labour market data and [best source](#) ([/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide#our-best-source-of-industry-information](#)) for analysing industry employment and jobs over time.

Australian Labour Account quadrants

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Jobs

- The **Jobs** quadrant provides data on the number of filled and vacant jobs
- **For the first time**, data are available on main and secondary jobs by industry over time.



People

- The **Persons** quadrant provides data on Persons employed, persons looking and available for employment and persons with potential for further employment.
- **For the first time**, data are available in a time series of employed persons in all jobs by industry.



Time

- The **Labour Volume** quadrant provides data on the relationship between hours of labour supplied by individuals, and hours of labour used by businesses.
- **For the first time**, hours worked will be reallocated to industry of main and secondary jobs.



Income & Costs

- The **Labour Payments** quadrant provides data on the relationship between total labour costs by businesses and total labour income of workers.



Australia is one of just a handful of countries producing a regular Labour Account and the Australian Labour Account is the most comprehensive. There is growing interest amongst the international community in producing labour accounts. Australia's experience has shown that a Labour Account framework is a useful addition to the System of National Accounts.

Annual experimental Labour Account estimates by [ANZSIC industry division \(/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-industrial-classification-anzsic/2006-revision-2-0\)](#) were first published by the ABS in [2017 \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia-experimental-estimates/latest-release\)](#). Since then, we have continued to evolve and expand the Labour Account.

The Labour Account is now published quarterly two days after the Australian National Accounts. It includes data by ANZSIC industry division (seasonally adjusted, trend and original) and sub-division (original only), from September quarter 1994 to the present.

Why produce a Labour Account

Forming an overall picture of the labour market from the variety of data available can be challenging as each dataset is produced for a particular purpose and they have differing reference periods, populations, concepts, definitions, and methodologies.

The Labour Account solves this by applying a conceptual framework to produce a single set of aggregate labour market statistics, reconciling and consolidating various datasets to draw on their relative strengths and mitigate their relative weaknesses.

The scope of the Labour Account is consistent with that of the national economy, as defined in the [Australian System of National Accounts \(ASNA\) \(/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/concepts-sources-methods/australian-system-national-accounts-concepts-sources-and-methods/2020-21/chapter-1-introduction/australian-system-national-accounts#scope-of-the-australian-system-of-national-accounts\)](#), ensuring direct compatibility with [National Accounts \(/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-national-income-expenditure-and-product/latest-release\)](#) and productivity estimates, and providing a labour-specific lens to national accounts data.

Case study: 'How many people are employed in Australia?'

This is a straightforward and common question, however prior to the development of the Australian Labour Account, the answer depended on how the question was asked and which data source was used.

Based on the [Labour Force Survey \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/mar-2024\)](https://statistics.abs.gov.au/absweb/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/mar-2024), collected from households, there were 14.3 million people employed in March 2024. Business survey estimates, collected from businesses and other enterprises where people work, indicated there were 15.7 million filled jobs in March 2024.

The key factor driving the difference is that they are counting different things. Household surveys are designed to produce estimates of people engaged in economic activity by asking about a person's main job, whereas business surveys count the number of jobs people are employed in ("filled jobs").

An important distinction here is that an employed person can have more than one job. In household surveys, a person holding multiple jobs with different employers in different industries will be counted once as an employed person in the industry of their main job. However, in business surveys they will be counted once for each job that they hold (both in the industry or industries of their main and secondary jobs).

The Labour Account uses knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of its data sources and their methodologies, to derive a single balanced estimate of the number of filled jobs. This is compiled by confronting data on the number of filled jobs from both business and household sources.

This balanced measure of filled jobs then flows through to the other quadrants of the Labour Account to ensure data are kept on a coherent basis. For example, a change to the estimate of filled jobs would flow through to the persons quadrant to affect the number of employed people and to the volume quadrant affecting the number of hours actually worked.



Benefits of the Labour Account

This section outlines the benefits of the Labour Account using a series of case studies to illustrate the strengths of the data and how it can be used.

(a) Coherent and consistent estimates

The Labour Account brings together labour statistics from multiple sources into the one single, integrated set of information.

In compiling the Labour Account, adjustments are made to each of the data sources to account for scope and conceptual differences between household surveys, business surveys and administrative datasets, to deliver a balanced set of internally consistent Labour Account estimates.

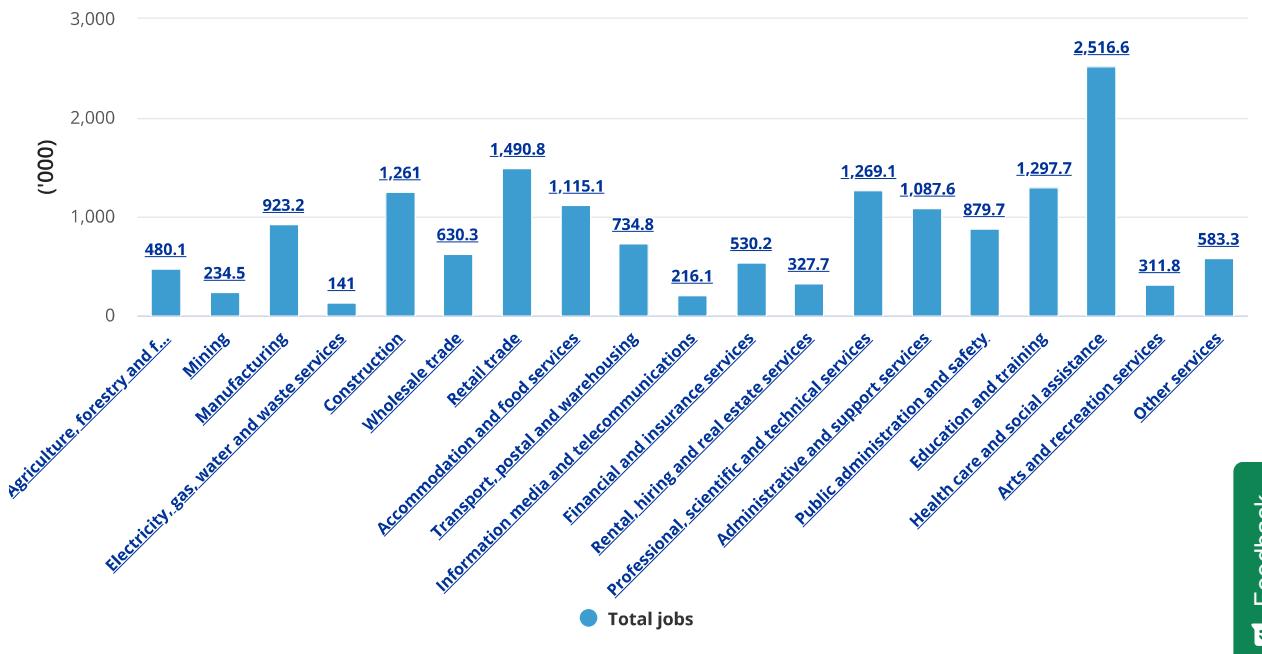
The four quadrants of the Labour Account are linked by a set of [identity relationships \(/methodologies/labour-account-australia-methodology/mar-2024#conceptual-framework\)](https://methodologies.abs.gov.au/labour-account-australia-methodology/mar-2024#conceptual-framework) which are specifically aligned. Some relationships are direct, such as "employed people in the total economy" being equal to "the number of main jobs". Other relationships are considered as indirect or derived, such as average hours worked per job, which is calculated by dividing total hours worked by the total number of jobs.

Case study: Identity relationships for jobs measures

The following drill-down graph shows relationships within the Labour Account Jobs quadrant by industry. In the Labour Account framework, total jobs are the sum of vacant jobs and filled jobs and in turn, filled jobs are the sum of main jobs and secondary jobs.

Using Agriculture, forestry and fishing as an example, there were 480,100 total jobs in this industry in March quarter 2024, with 477,300 of these jobs filled and 2,800 vacant. Going further, the filled jobs were made up of 449,600 main jobs and 27,700 secondary jobs.

Jobs measures, by industry, March quarter 2024



Feedback

Source: [Labour Account Australia \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/mar-2024\)](https://statistics.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/mar-2024) (seasonally adjusted)

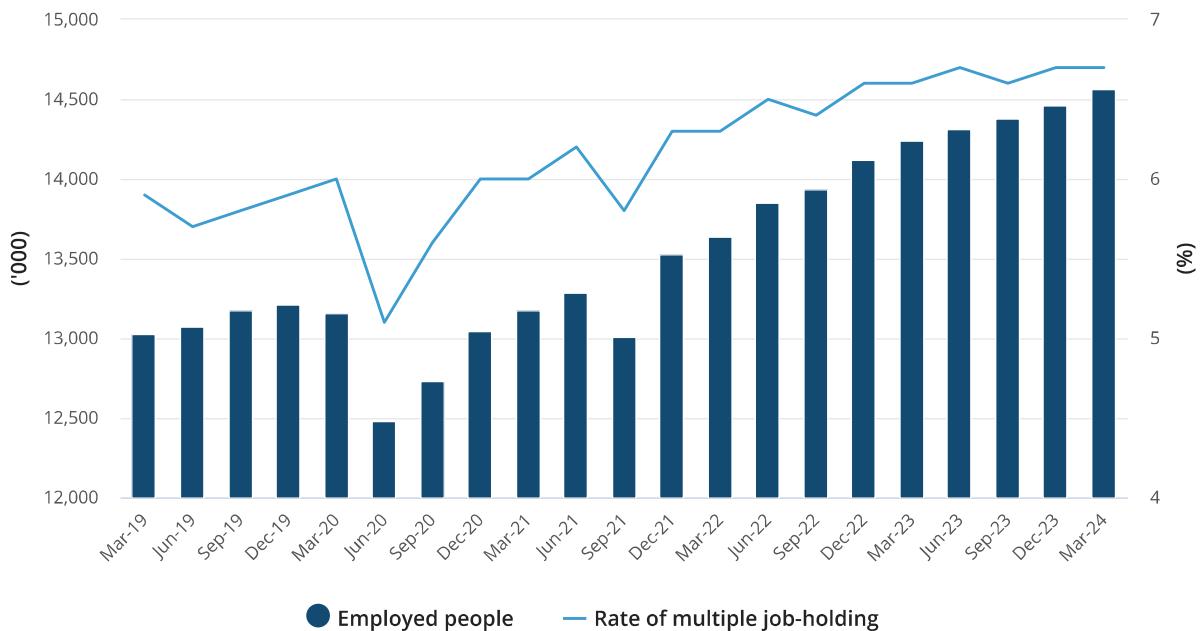
Case study: Deriving the rate of multiple job-holding from Labour Account data

As data across all four quadrants of the Labour Account are integrated and reconciled on a consistent and coherent basis, additional labour market insights can be drawn by using component data to derive new series.

One example is the rate of multiple job-holding which can be derived by dividing the number of multiple job-holders by the number of employed people. The multiple job-holding rate can provide insights into changing labour supply and demand dynamics, as well as the changing characteristics of available work.

Outside of sharp declines in the multiple job-holding rate in June quarter 2020 and September quarter 2021, coinciding with the most widespread COVID-19 public health measures, the multiple job-holding rate has risen steadily over the past 4 years before stabilising between 6.6 and 6.7 percent over the past year.

Employed people and rate of multiple job-holding



Source: [Labour Account Australia \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/mar-2024\)](https://statistics.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/mar-2024) (seasonally adjusted)



(b) More complete scope and coverage than other labour statistics

The Labour Account measures all people who contribute to Australian economic activity regardless of their residence status. This aligns the scope of the Labour Account with the National Accounts residency and production boundaries, providing a labour specific lens to national accounts data.

The Labour Account estimates labour market activity outside the scope of the Australian Labour Force Survey (LFS) and labour force surveys around the world, including the contribution of non-resident workers, permanent defence force personnel and employed persons under 15 years of age. This increased scope contributes to the difference between Labour Account and Labour Force Survey employed person and other estimates (such as hours worked). The Labour Account estimate is always higher.

(c) High quality headline industry estimates

The Labour Account is our best source of industry employment data by industry division and subdivision over time as it draws on the respective strengths of both household and business data sources, in addition to providing more complete scope and coverage than the LFS.

The Labour Account provides a set of labour related statistics that is consistent with the concepts, definitions and scope of the Australian System of National Accounts, which follows the international standards set out in the United Nations System of National Accounts. It aligns as closely as possible to the industry measurement in other National Accounts data sources, assigning industry based on the economic activity of the employer rather than an individual's description of their job.

Coupled with the more complete scope and coverage of the Labour Account, this approach provides high-quality hours worked data at an industry level which is incorporated into labour productivity measures produced as part of the Australian National Accounts.

The Labour Account includes estimates for the total number of employed people by industry, allocated to both main jobs and secondary jobs, as well as the number of jobs in each industry. This enables greater insight into the number of people employed in each industry than is possible from the LFS, which can only provide insights into the number of employed people by the industry of people's main job.

Our [Industry employment guide \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide\)](#) provides further information on the various sources of industry employment estimates and how they can be used.

(d) Complements traditional labour statistics with new insights

The Labour Account is designed to complement rather than replace existing ABS labour market data available from household surveys (such as the Labour Force Survey), business surveys and administrative data sources, by bringing it together into a single set of coherent estimates. We recommend it as the best source of data when analysing employment and jobs by industry over time.

The Labour Force Survey remains the key source for internationally comparable statistics on the labour force, employment and unemployment on an international level.

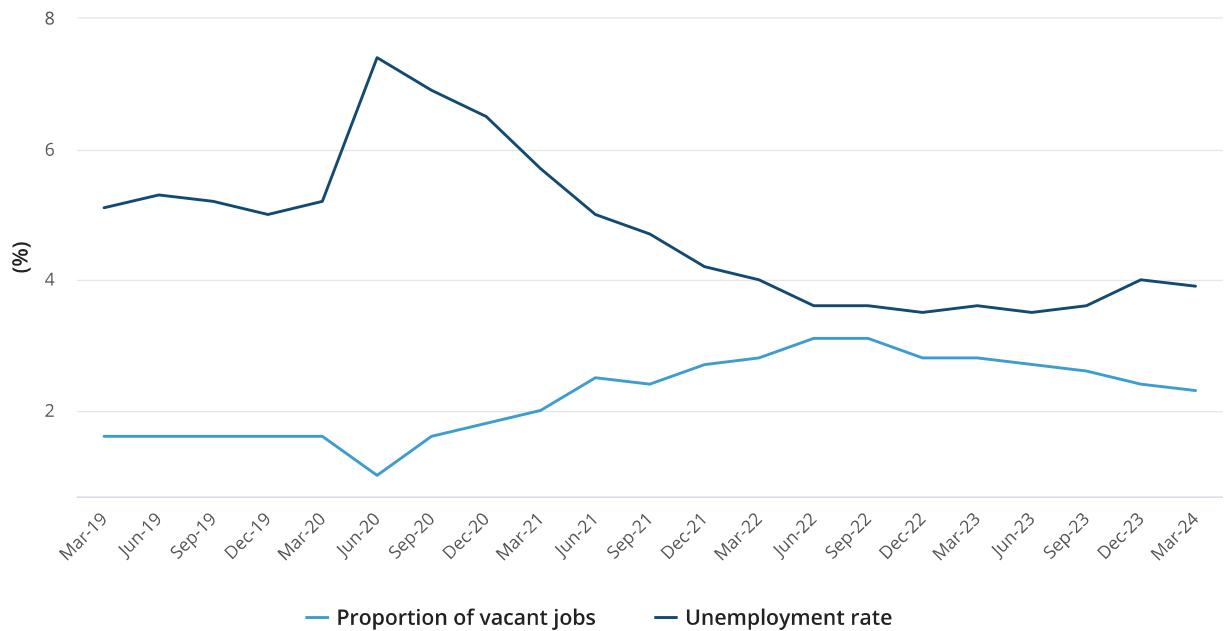
Case study: New insights into labour supply and demand dynamics

The proportion of vacant jobs is a unique measure derived within the Labour Account by dividing the number of vacant jobs by the total number of jobs. It can be used in conjunction with the unemployment rate from the LFS to analyse labour market dynamics.

The proportion of vacant jobs is an indicator of the level of labour demand within the economy whereas the unemployment rate is an indicator of available labour supply. There is a converse relationship between these two measures, so they often move in the opposite direction. Unlike some other summary measures of labour demand, the proportion of vacant jobs is a pure jobs-based measure (rather than looking at a relationship between vacancies and employed people or unemployed people).

In the June quarter 2020, coinciding with the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fall in the proportion of vacant jobs was accompanied by a rise in the unemployment rate. From here until the September quarter 2022 the proportion of vacant jobs increased while the unemployment rate declined as labour demand remained high and supply was constrained. In more recent quarters, the proportion of vacant jobs has eased while the unemployment rate has risen, although it remains low in historical terms.

Proportion of vacant jobs and unemployment rate



Source: [Labour Account Australia \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/mar-2024\)](#) (seasonally adjusted) and [Labour Force Australia \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/mar-2024\)](#) (seasonally adjusted)

 Feedback

(e) Supports multi-source and model-based approaches

The Labour Account is used as a mechanism for producing a range of complex multi-source labour statistics. It provides an established framework for reconciling multiple data sources to produce high quality, consistent and coherent aggregate estimates. These estimates can be used as benchmarks to derive finer level estimates using additional data sources.

We use the Labour Account in this way across a number of modelled and multi-source ABS outputs including:

- [Labour hire workers: \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release\)](#) The headline estimate of people employed and jobs worked in Labour supply services are sourced from the Labour Account.
- [Multiple job-holders: \(/statistics/labour/jobs/multiple-job-holders/latest-release\)](#) The headline estimates of the level and rate of multiple job-holding are sourced from the Labour Account.
- [Tourism Satellite Account: \(/statistics/economy/national-accounts/tourism-satellite-accounts-quarterly-tourism-labour-statistics-australia-experimental-estimates/latest-release\)](#) The employment estimates for each industry are sourced from the Labour Account.
- [Experimental Transport Satellite Account: \(/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-transport-economic-account-experimental-transport-satellite-account/latest-release\)](#) Data is used from the Labour Account to derive estimates of transport related and warehousing employed persons.

Case Study: Deriving quarterly labour hire workers headline estimate

Businesses that provide labour hire services, and their employees, are classified to the ANZSIC 4-digit industry class of 'Labour supply services' (ANZSIC 7212).

The Labour Account provides headline estimates of employed people and jobs by industry division (1-digit) and

subdivision (2-digit) on a quarterly basis. Data is not included for the Labour supply services industry (the 4-digit ANZSIC 7212).

However, we can produce 4-digit level estimates using data from the Linked Employer-Employee Dataset (LEED). The LEED is based on income taxation data, which the ABS receives from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). LEED contains a comprehensive suite of industry data including data at the 4-digit level and 2-digit level for every financial year.

Proportions calculated from the LEED are applied to quarterly 2-digit subdivision data from the Labour Account to model quarterly estimates of people employed and jobs worked in Labour supply services. For more information, please see the [Labour hire workers methodology](#) page.

Using Labour Account data

The Australian Labour Account supports detailed labour market and macro-economic analysis with an industry focus. While the Labour Account provides a labour specific lens to National Accounts data, it is also a powerful standalone labour statistics source.

The Labour Account enables us to form an overall picture of the labour market by bringing various pieces of labour market data together. It is particularly useful for comparing relationships across a range of components related to work and the broader labour market as the data has been integrated and reconciled to produce a consistent and coherent set of estimates.

More information

For further information about the Labour Account and other labour statistics, please see:

- [Labour Account methodology](#) Provides information on the conceptual framework, data sources, outputs and measurement error.
- [Guide to labour statistics](#) Provides summary information on a range of labour market measures available from the ABS.
- [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](#) Contains a comprehensive description of the concepts and definitions underpinning labour statistics and the data sources and methods used to compile them.